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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001605

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2019
TAGS: PGOV PTER PINS ASEC ID
SUBJECT: CENTRAL JAVA VILLAGERS PRESS ANTI-TERRORIST MESSAGE
REF: JAKARTA 1587 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Protesters have taken to the streets in Central Java to block the burial of several terrorists who were killed with Noordin M. Top in a police operation, September 16-17. The villagers involved see the terrorists as an embarrassment to Indonesia and do not want the remains in their areas. Islamic radicals have launched small counter-protests and are planning to hold a "remembrance ceremony" for the terrorists. In the meantime, the GOI is working with Malaysia regarding the return of Top's remains to his country of origin. The protests by the villagers highlight the environment in Central Java where authorities have pressed a robust counter-terrorist message since the July 17 bombings in Jakarta. END SUMMARY.

PROTESTS IN CENTRAL JAVA

¶2. (C) There have been peaceful protests in Central Java focused on blocking the burial of three terrorists. The three--Bagus Budi Pranoto aka "Urwah," Ario Sudarso aka "Aji" and Hadi Susilo aka "Adib"--were killed along with terrorist leader Noordin M Top in a police operation in Solo, Central Java, September 16-17. The September 23-24 protests took place in several villages in Central Java Province, including near Solo, Cilicap and Semarang. In the typical protest, according to contacts in Central Java, dozens of villagers carrying banners demanded that the GOI not bring the body into the area for burial, asserting that the slain terrorist was "evil" and an "embarrassment" to the country.

¶3. (C) The GOI has not interfered with the protests. The government, however, has urged the villagers to understand that the remains must be returned to families and then buried as soon as possible per Muslim law. Joko Widodo, the mayor of Solo and a strong opponent of extremism, told us that he thought the villagers should relent and allow the families to bury the bodies in their home areas given that that has been past practice in Indonesia. On the other hand, Alex Bambang Riatmodjo, the Central Java Police Chief, was quoted as sympathizing with residents of Solo and their protests: "Poor Solo, its people are actually kind and friendly, but because of the terrorists...the city's image has been more or less effected despite its best efforts."

RADICALS LAUNCH COUNTER-PROTESTS

¶4. (C) Islamic radicals have launched small counter-protests in the Solo area, demanding burials for the slain terrorists. At times the counter-protests got a bit rough, forcing police to arrest several of the radicals. No one was injured, however. Extremist leader Abu Bakar Bashir has

announced that he and other radicals plan to hold a "remembrance ceremony" for Top and the other terrorists. A number of students from the extremist Ngruki school outside of Solo plan to join Bashir in the event. Bashir had sponsored similar ceremonies for the terrorists killed in the August 7-8 police raid that took place in Temanggung, Central Java, and for the Bali bombers who were executed in November 2008.

WORKING WITH MALAYSIA TO RETURN TOP'S REMAINS

15. (C) In the meantime, the GOI is working with the Malaysian government in order to return Top's remains there. (Note: Top, a major Jemaah Islamiyah leader, was a Malaysian national who came to Indonesia after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.) Top's body is now in Jakarta waiting to be transported to Malaysia. It is not clear what the hold-up is in returning the body to Malaysia. That said, Top had several wives in Indonesia who are pressing for the body to be buried in Central Java where they live. The Indonesian government does not want Top to be buried in Indonesia, however.

ROBUST ANTI-TERROR EFFORTS IN CENTRAL JAVA

16. (C) The protests by the villagers highlight the environment in Central Java where authorities have pressed a robust counter-terrorist message since the July 17 bombings in Jakarta. Municipal areas in the region are full of huge posters and banners put up by the GOI asking the public to help with the capture of terrorists and their associates. The Central Java government has held public meetings

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attacking terrorism and urging the public to help eradicate it. In addition, police have been highly active in the region, launching large-scale anti-terrorist operations. Moreover, despite last week's killing of Top--the country's "most wanted" terrorist-- the police are not letting up on the pressure. Spurred on by all of this, the public reaction toward the terrorists is clearly moving toward one of anger and revulsion. That said, the extremists still have a handful of friends as witnessed by the counter-protests and plans for a "remembrance ceremony."

HUME